



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **12 SUR 13 gang members and associates netted in weekend operation by ICE, Orange County Sheriff's Office, and City of Apopka Police Department**

*-Arrests as a result of joint initiative by ICE and locals to keep communities safe-*

ORLANDO- A 26-year-old member of SUR 13 gang convicted for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon was among 12 Mexican gang members and associates arrested over the weekend in a joint operation between U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Orange County Sheriff's Office and the City of Apopka Police Department.

Francisco Najera, a national of Mexico, is now in ICE custody facing immigration charges for being in violation of immigration laws. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), Najera is removable from the country for being convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude.

Also arrested during the targeted enforcement operation was 20-year-old Arnulfo Valdez-Juarez, of Mexico. Valdez-Juarez was charged with Homicide earlier this year. He too is in violation of immigration laws and has been placed in removal proceedings.

These are the latest arrests under ICE's Operation Community Shield. The initial target of Operation Community Shield was the MS-13, which is the largest and most violent street gang in the country. In May 2005, ICE expanded Operation Community Shield to include all criminal street gangs with foreign-born members. With the launch of this second phase, ICE's Operation Community shield aims to ensure that gang members have no safe haven in our nation's communities. Since the launch of Operation Community Shield, there have been more than 3,450 street gang members and associates arrested nationwide.

This initiative also involves strong partnerships and cooperation with existing federal, state and local anti-gang efforts. Such partnerships are essential to the success of the initiative and to ensure officer safety during operations. The enforcement actions to date have been conducted in coordination with law enforcement at the federal, state and local levels.

Some of those arrested have a history of criminal activity including arrests for attempted murder, aggravated assault and possession of marijuana.

Five detainees were lodged against gang members and associates currently in local custody facing various criminal charges. All five are also facing administrative charges for being in violation of immigration laws.

“We are committed to working with our federal law enforcement partners to ensure that our law abiding citizens are protected from egregious offenders who seek to terrorize our community,” said Robert Weber, special agent-in-charge of ICE investigations in Tampa. “We will not tolerate gang activity in our city, and we will use all of our law enforcement tools to thwart the criminal efforts of gangs such as the SUR 13.

“Criminal aliens have a very high rate of recidivism and often re-victimize the community in which they reside,” said Michael Rozos, field office director for ICE detention and removal in Florida. “With every arrest we enhance public safety, while restoring integrity to our nation’s immigration system.”

“This is exactly how it is supposed to work,” said Orange County Sheriff Kevin Beary. “We had a Federal, city, and county agency come together in a multi-agency investigation and not only take some very dangerous criminals off the street but initiate the proceedings that will remove them from our country. I couldn’t be more pleased over what this operation accomplished this weekend.”

“We will continue working with our law enforcement partners at the local and federal level to ensure that our community remains protected from gangs such as the SUR 13,” said Chuck Vavrek, Apopka chief of police.

There were also six non-gang related arrests over the weekend. The six Mexican nationals arrested were identified as being illegally present in the country and were charged administratively for being in violation of immigration laws. All will remain in ICE custody awaiting the outcome of their cases.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*